



Northumberland

County Council

COMMITTEE: ASHINGTON & BLYTH LOCAL AREA COUNCIL

DATE: 15 FEBRUARY 2023

LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME 2023-24

Cabinet Member: John Riddle, Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services

Report of the Interim Executive Director: Rob Murfin, Interim Executive Director of Planning and Local Services

Purpose of report

This report sets out the details of the draft Local Transport Plan (LTP) programme for 2023-24 for consideration and comment by the Local Area Council, prior to final approval of the programme by the Executive Director responsible for Local Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment and Local Services.

Recommendations

Members of the Local Area Council are asked to comment on the proposals, so that their comments can be considered in the finalisation of the LTP programme for 2023-24.

Link to Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following key themes in the Corporate Plan for 2021-2024:

- Enjoying, Connecting - We will maintain, protect and enhance the environment, prioritising our commitments on Climate Change. We will deliver high-quality services in all our communities and secure investment in housing and transport across the County.

Key issues

1. The Local Transport Plan grant allocation is determined for the Council by the Department of Transport (DfT). The DfT have yet to confirm the capital allocations for 2023/24 and beyond. Subsequently, at this stage an indicative settlement of £23,488,124 has been assumed, based on the LTP allocation received from the DfT at the start of 2022/23.

2. A sum of £62,500 of the overall allocation will be retained by the North East Joint Transport Committee to cover central transport costs of the Joint Transport Committee. A £23,425,624 Council Local Transport Plan programme has therefore been developed for 2023-24, consisting of improvements and maintenance schemes to address four key areas: Sustainable Transport; Safety; Roads; and Bridges, Structures & Landslips.
3. Appendix A to D sets out the details of the recommended LTP Programme for 2023-24.
4. The final LTP programme will need to be reviewed and refined as appropriate to reflect the actual level of funding received from DfT and following consideration of feedback from the LACs, before being finalised in late February 2022.

Background

LTP PROGRAMME 2023 - 24

5. The draft LTP programme 2023/24 is based on an indicative settlement from DfT of £23,488,124, which reflects the LTP allocation received from the DfT at the start of 2022/23 and is the expected allocation for 23/24. This is made up of an indicative allocation of £21,780,000 for maintenance and £1,708,124 for integrated transport improvements. A sum of £62,500 of the integrated transport allocation will be retained by the North East Joint Transport Committee to cover central transport costs of the Joint Transport Committee, leaving a funding allocation for the Council's 2022/23 LTP programme of £23,425,624.
6. As in recent years, the highway maintenance element of the settlement is expected to include a contribution from the Highway Maintenance Incentive fund initiative. The capital funding from this element assumes that the Council retains the highest possible band 3 status and receives the maximum available funding. Confirmation of the funding settlement from the DfT is expected by the end of March 2023.
7. The £23,425,624 Local Transport Plan programme developed for 2023-24 consists of improvements and maintenance schemes to address four key areas: Sustainable Transport; Safety; Roads; and Bridges, Structures & Landslips, the details of the 2023/24 LTP programme are set out in Appendix A to D.
8. The summary of proposed expenditure in 2023-24 across scheme types is as follows:

Appendix	Scheme Type	Proposed Expenditure
A	Sustainable Transport	£2,085,000
B	Safety	£2,032,000
C	Roads	£16,102,624
D	Bridges, Structures and Landslips	£3,206,000
	Total Programme	£23,425,624

9. The LTP programme has been developed following a comprehensive review of the needs for the maintenance of the highway asset, identified road safety issues and potential improvement of the highway and transport network. Requests for improvements and maintenance received from the local community over time are recorded in the Directory of Requests database. County Council Members and Town and Parish Councils were provided with details of requests made from their own areas throughout the previous year and they are asked to take these into account when considering any priorities they submit for the programme.
10. Priorities for the 2023-24 programme were invited from County Council Members and Town and Parish Councils during early summer 2022 and those put forward have been assessed against criteria from the Local Transport Plan and Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP). These are then combined with consideration of road safety improvement needs, based on accident statistics and other data sources, and the asset management needs of the overall highway network, based on inspections, condition data and the network hierarchy, to determine an overall programme of capital investment.
11. It should be noted that in some cases the budget allocations contained in the Appendices to this report are estimates only. At this stage it is the issue or problem that has been prioritised for inclusion in the programme and the design process will provide options for finding a solution. The assessment of options takes account of a number of factors including value for money and affordability. Costs will be firmed up as the proposals proceed through the design process.
12. It should also be noted that any schemes from the 2022-23 programme which are not completed by the end of the financial year will continue to be implemented in 2023-24 and are not detailed in this report.
13. A brief description of the types of highways and transport issues addressed by the LTP programme is set out below.
14. Priority for Integrated Transport is given to schemes that contribute to the achievements of LTP objectives. The objectives reflect local needs and are related to national transport goals. These goals are:
 - a. to support economic growth;
 - b. to reduce carbon emissions;
 - c. to promote equality of opportunity;
 - d. to contribute to better safety, security and health; and,
 - e. to improve the quality of life and a healthy natural environment.
15. The improvement part of the programme is aimed at creating improvements for all types of users of the highway network. The allocations are split between different types of proposals aimed at making improvements for sustainable transport, as well as improvements for road users. The improvements are designed to make the highway environment more attractive to the range of users, address areas of congestion and meet new and increased demands.
16. The Highway Capital Maintenance programme is split between different types of proposals aimed at maintaining the highway infrastructure by achieving objectives set out in the Council's Transport Asset Management Plan (TAMP). Funds are allocated across the programme by applying a scoring process that has been

developed following asset management principles in order to deliver the TAMP objectives.

17. The majority of the highway maintenance programme is aimed at addressing the structural decline of our roads as they form the largest part of our highway assets. We also take account of the needs of the other asset groups such as footways and cycleways, drainage, structures and traffic management assets. A risk-based approach is used to determine priorities for maintenance and is based on priorities at a strategic level, transport network level and asset maintenance level.
18. It should be noted that proposed expenditure for Maintenance within the programme is £20,863,624 and for Integrated Transport is £2,562,000. These are generally in line with the expected allocations, but with Integrated Transport slightly exceeding the allocation and Maintenance expenditure set to balance this.

Sustainable Transport

19. The £2,085,000 allocation for sustainable transport is split across 'Improvements' and 'Maintenance' activities. Improvements for sustainable transport are already a significant feature within the LTP programme. This year the draft LTP for 2023-24 has a specific allocation of £880,000 for sustainable transport improvements as set out in Appendix A attached to this report. This allocation includes £480,000 for the permanent pedestrianisation of Narrowgate, Alnwick to create a more pedestrian friendly environment. The allocation also contains £400,000 for other sustainable transport improvements such as new footways, crossings, street lighting for pedestrians and public transport improvements.
20. In addition, the sustainable transport allocation includes £1,205,000 for maintaining existing footpaths (rights of way), footways (along the side of the road) and cycleways (either part of the road or adjacent to it).
21. Alongside these specific allocations, it should be noted that much of the Safety element of the programme in Appendix B will also contribute to ensuring that the highway environment is improved in a way that will encourage more walking and cycling, for example, speed reduction, road safety improvements and safety outside schools, which will support cycling and walking by creating a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrians.
22. It should be noted that a number of County Councillors and Town and Parish Councils put forward priorities for the introduction of new cycleways and footways which when assessed were considered to be beyond the funding scope that would be available through the LTP capital programme. The details of these potential cycleways and footways have been captured separately and recorded so that they can also be

considered should any other appropriate sources of external funding or bidding opportunities for such schemes become available.

23. The details of the draft LTP Sustainable Transport Programme of £2,085,000 for 2023-24 is set out in Appendix A, attached to this report.

Safety

24. An allocation of £2,032,000 has been made to improve safety on the highway network. Details of the programme are set out in Appendix B attached to this report.
25. £950,000 is aimed at reducing the number and severity of road traffic casualties, through a programme of local safety schemes. Funding available for safety improvements to High Risk Sites will be at an increased level of £600,000 compared to £220,000 in 2017-18. It also includes allocations of £250,000 for Rural Road Safety Improvements and £50,000 for Urban Road Safety Improvements.
26. £732,000 has been allocated to improve traffic management and traffic calming measures. Much of this funding will also create safer conditions where road safety concerns have been identified which will in turn encourage more walking and cycling. Specific funding continues to be allocated to improve road safety around schools. The programme of introduction of 20mph speed limits outside schools is now reaching its conclusion and an allocation of £125,000 has been made for completion of any remaining schemes in 2023/24. An allocation of £75,000 has also been made for other school safety measures such as introduction of school streets schemes. These schemes at schools continue to address safety concerns and should encourage more children and their parents and carers to walk or cycle to school.
27. A £350,000 allocation has been included to continue with the general refurbishment and renewal of existing signage and the replenishment of existing road markings. Both of these activities seek to improve the general safety for the highway user.

Roads

28. This section of the programme is the largest part of the programme with an allocation of £16,102,624 for maintenance of existing roads, including drainage, traffic lights, street lighting and car park maintenance.
29. The programme is guided by the principles of effective asset management and is made up of £7,438,624 for named carriageway repair and drainage schemes (of which £2,540,624 is on major roads and the resilient road network, £4,498,000 on other local roads and £400,000 on approaches to those level crossings set to be modified as part of the Northumberland Line project); £4,109,000 for surface dressing; £400,000 for micro surfacing; and finally £4,155,000 of general refurbishment which includes drainage, traffic signals, street lighting column replacement and car parks as well as preparatory work for the next year's surface dressing programme.
30. The works on approaches to the Northumberland Line level crossings are areas where carriageway is in relatively poor condition and works are proposed to be carried out before the line is in increased use for passenger train operation.
31. It should be noted that a significant allocation of funding for C class and unclassified (U class) roads has been made within the named carriageway repair schemes,

surface dressing and micros surfacing programmes, deliberately targeted towards the continued effort with improving their condition.

32. The details of the draft Roads Programme for 2023-24 is set out in Appendix C attached to this report.

Bridges, Structures and Landslips

33. An allocation of £2,611,000 has been made for bridge maintenance. Again, effective asset management is the main driver. This includes a programme that also addresses the maintenance backlog by providing bridge strengthening to a number of bridges as this continues to remain a key objective.

34. There is also an allocation of £595,000 for addressing landslips to enable stabilisation work as a cost-effective approach to prevent the deterioration and potential loss of use of the network at critical locations throughout the County.

35. The details of the Bridges, Structures and Landslips Programme of £3,206,000 for 2023-24 is set out in Appendix D, attached to this report.

Next Steps

36. Following consideration by Local Area Councils at their meetings in February, any comments received will be considered and the final 2023-24 programmes for the Local Transport Plan will be prepared for consideration and approval by the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Local Services and the Executive Director responsible for Local Services.

37. Following agreement of the final programme, all County Council members and Town and Parish Councils who put forward priorities for the LTP programme will then be provided with further information regarding the outcome of the assessment of their submission and whether it has been possible to include their priority schemes within the programme this year.

38. It should also be noted that it is intended to undertake a review of the process for developing future years LTP programmes during 2023/24, in particular to consider moving away from an annual process to a multi-year LTP programme that better aligns with the MTFP period. The LACs will be consulted on any proposed changes as part of the LTP review process.

Implications

Policy	The proposed programmes are consistent with existing policies
Finance and value for money	<p>The LTP Programme allocations are within the expected budget available for 2023-24. The £23,488,124 quoted in this report is an indicative figure and confirmation of the final allocation is awaited from DfT and is expected before March 2023.</p> <p>Should the allocation vary from that expected the programme will be amended in the final decision report.</p>

Legal	The LTP is delivered by the County Council using its powers and in fulfilment of its statutory duties as a Highways Authority, primarily under the provisions of the Highways Act 1980
Procurement	Not applicable
Human Resources	None
Property	None
Equalities (Impact Assessment attached) Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	As a key issue for Northumberland, the needs of those that are socially excluded have been taken into account in the development of this programme.
Risk Assessment	The programme has been developed to minimise risks to the travelling public. Risks to the delivery of any individual scheme within the programme will be considered during scheme development. By managing risk at scheme level risk to delivery of the programme will be controlled.
Crime & Disorder	The implications of Section 17, Crime and Disorder Act 1998 have been considered whilst developing this proposal, there are no perceived adverse effects.
Customer Consideration	The delivery of the programme will improve the highways and transport network in Northumberland for the benefit of the travelling public.
Carbon reduction	Schemes to encourage sustainable transport, as well as road safety and those which aim to reduce congestion will encourage modal shift and reduce overall carbon levels making a positive contribution to the achievement of the Council's Climate Change targets
Health and Wellbeing	Schemes to encourage more active travel through improved infrastructure for sustainable transport, road safety measures and improvement to the condition of footways and roads all act to improve the overall health and wellbeing of our communities.
Wards	All

Background papers:

N/A

Report sign off.

Authors must ensure that officers and members have agreed the content of the report:

	Full Name of Officer
Monitoring Officer/Legal	NM
Executive Director of Finance & S151 Officer	JW
Relevant Executive Director	RM
Acting Chief Executive	RF
Portfolio Holder(s)	JR

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Appendices

Appendices A to D – LTP Programme 2023-24